

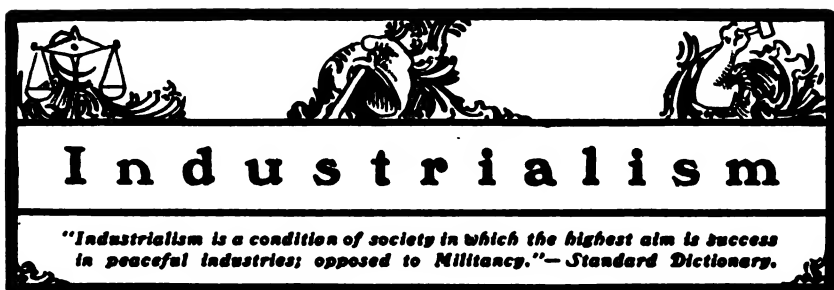
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## *The Boot and Shoe Workers*

In early times, the shoe worker was, in fact, a shoemaker, who traveled from house to house, carrying his lasts, leather and tools with him wherever he went. In the sparsely settled districts, he stayed at one house until the family needs or purse was satisfied. Necessarily his styles were few and crude. An attempt was made to fit the foot by varying the shape of the last, by tacking on pieces of leather. In this sense all shoes were custom-made, but while they were generally durable, they were neither handsome nor comfortable. Shoe making as a fine art, as it exists today, was unknown.

The shoemaker of that day was the master of a skilled trade. His work was all done by hand. He came in contact with all classes of men, and the constant grinding of one intellect against another made him intelligent. He was quick to resent any encroachment upon his rights, and as new methods of manufacture brought shoemakers together under one roof, they were among the pioneers of the Union movement in this country. Their strikes have figured in the courts of this country for more than fifty years.

The hand shoemaker has nearly disappeared from the face of the earth, and the factory system has taken his place. In the early days of the factory system, the labor was subdivided so that some parts were done by

*Evolution of Shoe Making.*

machinery, and other parts were still done by hand, but as machinery continued to develop, one after another these subdivisions of hand labor were swept away, until practically all of the minute subdivisions of the work of making shoes are now done by machinery. The independent hand shoemaker has vanished and in his place we find the machine-tending factory hand or "shoe worker."

Various attempts have been made to compute the labor-displacing power of shoe machinery, but in the opinion of the writer, the effect has been too great to estimate accurately. Sixteen years ago, the writer saw heels nailed on women's shoes by hand. The average workman could nail on about 100 pairs per day. Now, a machine is used, which, with a man and a boy, it is claimed will do from 2,400 to 3,600 pairs, or 7,200 shoes in a day.

On the basis of the latter figures, the operator of the machine takes a shoe from the rack, jacks it in the machine, starts and stops the machine, takes the shoe out and returns it to the rack, for each  $2\frac{1}{2}$  seconds for the day of 10 hours, and in order to do this day's work, must gain time to gather materials, adjust the machine, etc. A ladies' fine shoe has been made from the skin, complete, in 19 minutes, passing through nearly 100 different operations.

From these statements the reader may gather some idea of the nervous

tension under which the shoe worker of the present day labors. Since our national union began last year to pay sick benefits, we have noticed that even in our best union factories, a frequent cause of illness is nervous prostration.



With these environments it would be only natural to expect the shoe worker to become nervous, irritable, and easily excited. The monotony of doing a small part many thousands of times a

stimulants. The moral effect of the modern factory is naturally bad. That the shoe worker has preserved his relative standing as to temperance and morals, is a credit to his innate worth, and not to the conditions under which he works.

The effect of machinery upon wages has been bad. This is due in part to the failure of some subdivisions to accept machinery when it entered the field. Some foolishly opposed the introduction of machinery and thus destroyed their own

HORACE M. EATON

General Secretary-Treasurer of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union.

day, amidst noisy machinery, would seem almost to excuse an attempt to forget the struggle for existence in excessive indulgence in alcoholic

economic power, and so hastened the introduction of the machinery they opposed. The shoe workers failed to get their just deserts when machinery

was introduced, first, because they were not organized strongly enough, and second, because the organizations they did have were either divided against themselves, or pursued a policy of opposition wholly. The result has been that the man has become a servant to the machine, instead of a master of it.

Machinery now enables the shoe factories of this country to supply the year's market in four months. If any factory runs more, it gets more than its share. This means a surplus of labor, and the man who is employed becomes timid. The man out of work cuts prices to get work, and so wages fall. The unscrupulous employer takes advantage of the surplus of labor and cuts wages. A fight ensues and disaster comes to both.



Past organizations have tried to check this ruinous tendency but could not stop it. Many of **Past Organizations.** these unions, the Cordwainers, Crispins, Lasters' Union, International Union, Knights of Labor, etc., were useful in their day and accomplished much, but all were founded upon false ideas as to economy in paying low dues and no benefits. They denied pennies to the union and gave dollars to the employers. They lacked the beneficent influence of a trade union label at first, and finally, the three organizations last mentioned, existing contemporaneously, adopted different union labels at the same time, and reaped the usual reward of divided effort. Then these three amalgamated in the present union in 1895.

The sole purpose in forming the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, was to have one union label representing the entire craft. The result was the Union Stamp, which was adopted in April, 1895.

For four years the union clung to its old idea of low dues. It had a label, but no money with which to push it. Still, considerable progress

was made on the Union Stamp in the four years, but during that time voluntary organization of shoemakers had almost ceased. A union was formed either because the boss cut wages, or because the boss wanted the Union Stamp.

During all this time the shoe workers were industriously exploited by the various kinds of political reformers. They were told that the union was no good, and to vote this, that or the other way. The reformers had an unrestricted field as the union was insignificant in comparison with the whole number of shoe workers, but still the tide of organization ebbed, and the condition of the worker grew worse. We think we hear some of our reformer friends saying that "with the conditions outlined in this article it is folly to attempt to contend against them with economic weapons alone, and that the thing to do is to vote for collective ownership," etc.

Possibly you may be right, brother. It is perhaps your business to talk political action. You are engaged in a political movement. We are engaged in an economic movement. We sympathize with you and wish you success in your undertaking, but must request you, while you are prosecuting your work in your way, to refrain from plunging the assassin's knife into the vitals of the labor union. If you expect us to support your *political* movement, you must respect our *economic* movement. We are engaged in enlisting raw recruits to be drilled and prepared for economic contests. We desire through more perfect organization, financial potency, and Union Stamp demand, to render our economic efforts more successful. You may talk all the politics you desire to the recruits, and the more recruits the better your opportunity; therefore, do not teach him disloyalty to the movement that first took him out of the ranks of the indifferent, and gave you the opportunity to talk to him at all.

But to return to the subject. It appeared then, that if a union existed

**Higher Dues.** be one with financial power. Accordingly, in June, 1899, our convention met the issue by adopting high dues and benefits, and since that time, in spite of internal opposition to high dues at the start, our progress has been phenomenal. Under high dues, in one year, we have accomplished more than in the previous four years. Our Union Stamp is rapidly gaining in power. Our *Journal* is doing us lots of good. Our funds are accumulating. We are winning the respect of the manufacturers. There are fewer strikes. We are checking the downward tendency of wages, and securing fair compensation for extra work. Members are more loyal and take pride in the union. Confidence is inspired by the payment of benefits. Many manufacturers, some of them the largest in the trade, are now contemplating adopting the Union Stamp. In every respect, the future of the union looks bright, and full of promise of enlarged benefits to our craftsmen, and a notable accession of strength to the labor movement in general.



A word here about the possibilities of the Union Label. A person will use care in deciding where he will work and under what conditions. If all who toil will exercise the same care in deciding how the wages of their labor shall be spent, great reforms will be accomplished.

The workman at the store spending his wages is an employer of labor. It is for him to say what kind of labor he will employ. If he patronizes the product of union labor, he is strengthening his own cause by building up his fellow unionists of other trades. When a shoe worker buys a garment with the Union Label, he benefits his own condition by making the Garment Workers stronger.

He strikes a blow for the home and against the sweat shop.

This reasoning applies with equal force to trades not having union labels. A railroad employe is interested in the existence of a strong union movement. The stronger the general movement, the more attention will be paid to the reasonable demands of labor. Labor legislation keeps pace with the general degree of organization. When the workers combine their producing and purchasing powers, their enemies must take to the woods. All politicians and all governments will freely grant them legislative favors.

On the other hand, if organization should decline and only one was left, that one would immediately be crushed. "United we stand, divided we fall." The duty, then, of every working man, and all dependent on him or friendly to him, is to purchase Union Label goods.



The Union Stamp is used in factories where all employes are members of our union. We sign a contract with the employer to arbitrate all disputes for a stated time, usually three years. This leaves the wage question in any factory open at all times subject to arbitration. Our members get better treatment under this system because they confer a benefit upon the business, i. e., the Union Stamp. Our object is to assist our fair employers to drive the unfair ones out of the market, and thus assist the union in gaining a complete supervision of the labor, attaining which, we can then eliminate child labor, fix the minimum rates of wages, and generally level up conditions; and what is still more important, shorten the hours of labor. A radical increase in the wage list of any union factory would check the influence of that factory upon its competitors, and thus retard our general progress. With the assistance of organized labor and our fair employers,

we propose to give our unfair employers all they want of "competition." We are applying the most approved "trust" methods to the labor situation.



We have tried to acquaint the readers of the *LOCOMOTIVE FIREMEN'S*

*To the Firemen.* MAGAZINE with our past and present difficulties.

We want our present purposes and methods to be understood, and we hope to merit and receive their support as purchasers of Union Stamp footwear.

Every month we are absorbing new factories into our alliance. Any reader who desires to assist our movement can obtain a list of our union factories by writing to H. M. Eaton, Room 434 Albany Building, Boston, Mass.

We have admired your magnificent organization from a distance, and we want to know it better. Some of your lodges have already given us support, and we know that others will, and now we wish to warn you against excuses and subterfuges which some shoe dealers are prone to make. We wish every reader to bear the following facts in mind:

1. No shoe is union-made unless it bears our Union Stamp. (Some manufacturers and dealers lie about this, saying the shoes are union-made but do not bear the stamp. This is an untruth in every instance.)

2. The Union Stamp is issued free of cost to the employer and absolutely no charge is made for its use. (Some dealers charge 25 or 50 cents more for

a shoe with the Union Stamp. Such a dealer is an imposter and should not be patronized.)

3. "Union Stamp" shoes are in the market. If your dealer says he can't get them, insist that he write to us and we will gladly see that he is supplied.

4. Shoe manufacturers and dealers of supposed integrity, have stooped to the basest falsehood in order to sell *non-union* shoes,—yes, and penitentiary-made shoes—and all friends of our cause need to be at all times on guard against deception, duplicity, and of counterfeits and substitutes.

In conclusion, fellow unionists, we think you will agree with us that we have a great task before us, and yet our courage is good. We note the progress of the past and have an abiding faith in the future. We see on every hand signs of the worker awakening to a knowledge of his economic power. We see closer affiliations and greater concentration of the forces of labor.

As this development goes on, we expect to see, in our time, a gradual drawing together of the forces of labor into one compact force, well drilled and splendidly equipped. We expect our Union to be a not insignificant part of this grand army of labor, which all governments will respect, and to whom all courts will grant justice, and whose power for good no employer will defy. So be it.

Fraternally yours,

*Grace M. Eaton*



## L a b o r   N o t e s



**UNIONS IN POLITICS.**—The union men of Atlanta, Ga., have the following representatives in their municipal government: Councilmen, Charles Barrett of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, Henry F. Garrett of the Association of Machinists, and Branch Lewis of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers; Deputy Commissioner of Public Works,

J. W. Bradwell of the Stonecutters Union; Deputy City Marshal, William Strauss of the Journeymen Tailors Union; Clerk in City Attorney's office, Charles Hefflin of the Street Railway Employees Union; and there is a probability of the appointment of Charles Briard of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, as City Electrician. There is no city in the United States